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SEP 17 2012



**JUDICIAL STANDARDS
COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE
JUDICIAL STANDARDS COMMISSION**

INQUIRY NO. 12-075

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

**C. THOMAS EDWARDS
DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
JUDICIAL DISTRICT 25**

This matter came to the attention of the Judicial Standards Commission by a written complaint filed with the Commission by Ms. Pamela Stilley. A formal investigation was ordered by the Commission and conducted by the Commission's investigator. During its meeting on August 10, 2012, the Commission completed its review of the investigative report prepared in this matter. The Commission caused a copy of this Public Reprimand to be personally served upon Judge C. Thomas Edwards. In accordance with Rule 11(b) of the Rules of the Judicial Standards Commission, a judge has 20 days within which to accept the Public Reprimand or to reject it and demand, in writing, that disciplinary proceedings be instituted in accordance with Rule 12 of the Rules of the Judicial Standards Commission.

Findings of Fact

1. C. Thomas Edwards was at all times referred to herein, a judge of the General Court of Justice, District Court Division, Judicial District 25 and, as such was subject to the Canons of the North Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct, the laws of the State of North Carolina, and the provisions of the oath of office for a district court judge as set forth in the North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 11.
2. Judge Edwards presided over a hearing on the issue of equitable distribution of marital property in the matter of *Joey Glenn Stilley vs. Pamela Louise Stilley*, Catawba County Clerk of Superior Court File No., 05 CVD 630. The hearing was conducted on

numerous days over a period of several months and was concluded on July 22, 2008.

3. No written equitable distribution judgment was entered until June 1, 2012.
4. Judge Edwards acknowledged he has no excuse for his delay in entering the written judgment, notwithstanding the complexity of the case and recurring inquiries by counsel for each party regarding completion of the order. The Commission took into consideration, as mitigating factors, that Judge Edwards has a heavy caseload and no administrative staff to assist him in drafting orders.
5. Judge Edwards cooperated fully with this investigation.

Conclusions

The Commission views such lengthy delay in rendering written decision as serious misconduct because of the adverse consequences on individual litigants, who are deprived of the opportunity to have their claims decided in a timely manner, and on public confidence in the administration of justice. Such circumstances compel the Commission to act in order to ensure that the public is protected from the deleterious effects of unwarranted delays.

Respondent's delay in entering the written order described above evidences a serious disregard of the principles of professional conduct embodied in the North Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct, including failure to personally observe appropriate standards of conduct to ensure that the integrity and independence of the judiciary shall be preserved (Canon 1), failure to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary (Canon 2A), failure to diligently perform the duties of judicial office (Canon 3), and failure to promptly dispose of the business of the court (Canon 3A(5)). Respondent's actions also constitute conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute (N.C. Const. art IV, § 17 and N.C.G.S. § 7A-376(b)).

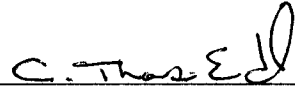
Corrective Action and Acceptance of Terms

1. Judge Edwards agrees that he will not repeat such conduct in the future, mindful of the potential threat any repetition of his conduct poses to public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary and to the administration of justice.
2. Judge Edwards agrees that he will purposefully ensure the timely entry of written orders in all cases over which he presided wherein orders are currently pending, and in all future

matters, mindful of the potential threat any repetition of his conduct poses to attorneys, litigants and the public's confidence in the integrity of the judiciary and to the administration of justice.

3. Judge Edwards agrees he will promptly read and familiarize himself with the Code of Judicial Conduct.
4. Judge Edwards affirms he has consulted with, or had the opportunity to consult with, counsel prior to acceptance of this Public Reprimand.
5. Judge Edwards further agrees that he will not retaliate against any person known or suspected to have cooperated with the Commission, or otherwise associated with this matter.

I, C. Thomas Edwards, hereby accept the terms contained in this Public Reprimand this the 13 day of September, 2012.

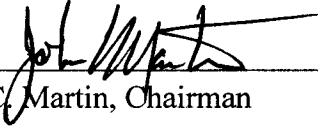


C. Thomas Edwards

ORDER OF PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Now therefore, pursuant to the Constitution of North Carolina, Article IV, Section 17, the procedures prescribed by the North Carolina General Assembly in the North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 7A, Article 30, and Rule 11(b) of the Rules of the Judicial Standards Commission, the North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission, hereby orders that C. Thomas Edwards, be and is hereby PUBLICLY REPRIMANDED for the above set forth violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct. Judge Edwards shall not engage in such conduct in the future and shall fulfill all of the terms of this Public Reprimand as set forth herein.

Dated this the 17th day of September, 2012.



John C. Martin, Chairman
Judicial Standards Commission